

Report

Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure

Part 1

Date: 5 July 2021

Subject **Collections Review – Newport Museums and Heritage Service**

Purpose To seek Cabinet Member approval for reference books to be de-accessioned.

Author Museum and Art Gallery Manager

Ward General

Summary The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure approval to initiate the process of formally removing a number of reference books from the permanent collection of Newport Museum and Art Gallery and dispose of them in accordance with the disposal process contained in the Collections Development Policy 2020.

Proposal The removal of books from the permanent collection is approved and the disposal process can be initiated.

Action by Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Head of Law and Regulation – Monitoring Officer
- Head of Finance – Chief Finance Officer
- Head of People and Business Change
- Culture and Continuing Learning Manager
- Collections and Engagement Officer
- Museums Association

Signed

Background

From the late 1940s to the late 1960s, and on rare occasions outside this range of dates up to the 1980s, Museum and Art Gallery curatorial staff elected to accession reference books acquired for the study and interpretation of objects and collections in the Museum's care. This was done for inventory purposes and not with the intention to keep the books in perpetuity.

Accessioning however is now understood as the formal process of adding an object to the permanent collections of the Museum with the intention to preserve it for current and future generations. Items are recorded in the accession register and marked with an accession number. To aid the preservation of collections, restrictions and protocols regarding storage, access and use are imposed.

Reference books do not fall within this category as they are generally stored in office areas and used freely by staff and researchers. As the accessioning process has been completed for the books identified in this report, they now are part of the Museum's permanent collection and should be treated as such when their disposal is considered.

The Museums Association and the Code of Ethics

Newport Museums & Heritage Service meets its responsibility to future generations by ensuring that its collections are well managed and sustainable. The Service recognises the Museum Association's position that ethically managed rationalisations of collections form part of a Museum's long-term collections policy.

The Museums Association is a membership organisation providing services to and reflecting the interests of museums and those who work for and govern them. It expects all its members to uphold and promote the Code of Ethics for Museums and follow its underpinning principles. The Museums Association supports the responsible de-accessioning of items so long legal and ethical requirements are met. The term de-accessioning refers to the removal of objects from a museum's collections. De-accessioning is supported by the Museums Association if:

- The organisation is legally able to do so;
- It is carried out within the framework of a collections development policy;
- It is undertaken on the advice of a range of staff and agreed by the governing body;
- It is carried out with the intention of keeping items in the public domain;
- It is carried out with public interest and benefit in mind.

Reasons for the Proposal

The books identified in this report are mostly of a general scientific, archaeological, art historical or historical nature. They are out of date and no longer relevant for the interpretation and research of the Museum's formal collection. They take up valuable storage space, especially considering the planned move of the Information Station to the premises.

Museum staff would therefore like to de-accession the books identified in this report guided by the framework devised by the Museums Association and ratified in the Collections Development Policy. It is our intention to retain books with direct relevance to the collections for reference purposes and dispose of the remaining items. The framework will ensure that the process is informed by the highest standards of expertise and takes all legal and other circumstances into consideration. Furthermore, it strongly favours the transfer of material to other public institutions to retain items in the public domain.

Material of local relevance will be offered to Newport's library service with the view to add appropriate items to the reference collection. It is only after due consideration of alternative methods, including books being offered to a Charity for re-sale, that they would be destroyed through pulping.

Financial Summary

There are minimal financial implications arising from the approval of the Collections Development Policy. Costs for pulping would be minimal, up to £200 depending on the amount of books left and number of boxes generated.

Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
Negative publicity for Museums & Heritage Service and NCC	M	L	Application of the disposal framework ensures that all disposals are carried out in an ethical manner and with support of the Museums Association.	Museum & Art Gallery Manager

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The removal of the collection of reference books enables the more efficient use and re-distribution of available storage space. De-accessioning will be carried out in accordance with Newport Museums & Heritage Service's recently approved Collections Development Policy.

Options Available and considered

- Option 1 To retain the books and continue to occupy valuable storage space.
Option 2 The disposal process is initiated.

Preferred Option and Why

The preferred option is to initiate the process of de-accessioning and disposal to ensure Newport's collections remain sustainable and resources are not wasted on the maintenance and storage of non-relevant material.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There is a minimal cost associated with this proposal which will be met through existing budget.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the report. If these reference books no longer serve any useful purposes in relation to the collections, then they can be de-accessioned and disposed of in accordance with the Council's Collections Development Policy. The Council is able to dispose of surplus assets in accordance with its general powers of management under the Public Libraries and Museums Act and the Local Government Act 1972. For the purposes of disposing of these surplus reference books, it is assumed that the Council has full legal title and legal ownership and none of the books are subject to any reserved rights in favour of donors. It is noted that the books will first be offered to the library service for retention in public ownership and then offered to charity. Therefore, the books will have no re-sale value and will need to be destroyed if they cannot be gifted elsewhere.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

The report writer has fully considered the council's well-being objectives, the well-being goals and the sustainable development principle of the Well-being of Future Generations Act when developing this report.

From an HR perspective there are no staffing implications to this proposal.

Comments of Cabinet Member

Cabinet Member has been briefed on the report.

Scrutiny Committees

N/A

Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

The Museum and Art Gallery is accessible to all and collections and associated information are available through various formats including displays, online/social media content and activities and events. Objects not on display – or any further information relating to existing collections – can be accessed on request. Adjustments to meet an individual's needs arising from one of the protected characteristics are made as far as reasonable practicable.

The books in question are of a general historical or art historical nature and their disposal frees up resources which can be re-directed to more efficiently curate a relevant collection. The Museum collects guided by its Collections Development Policy which acknowledges that the collections are non-representative of Newport's diverse makeup and highlights that we actively seek to acquire material linked to under-represented communities and themes. Decisions on acquisitions are informed by a series of criteria contained in the Collections Development Policy which is published on our website.

The Equality Act 2010 contains a Public Sector Equality Duty which came into force on 06 April 2011. The Act identifies a number of 'protected characteristics', namely age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership. The new single duty aims to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the regular business of public authorities. Compliance with the duty is a legal obligation and is intended to result in better informed decision-making and policy development and services that are more effective for users. In exercising its functions, the Council must have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The Act is not overly prescriptive about the approach a public authority should take to ensure due regard, although it does set out that due regard to advancing equality involves: removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics; taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these differ from the need of other people; and encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Children and Families (Wales) Measure

Although no targeted consultation takes place specifically aimed at children and young people, consultation on planning applications and appeals is open to all of our citizens regardless of their age. Depending on the scale of the proposed development, applications are publicised via letters to neighbouring occupiers, site notices, press notices and/or social media. People replying to consultations are not required to provide their age or any other personal data, and therefore this data is not held or recorded in any way, and responses are not separated out by age.

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

A prosperous Wales: Focussed collecting considers available resources including storage space and storage requirements at the point of an object's acquisition and, together with collections rationalisation efforts guided by a Collections Development Policy, results in an efficiently managed collection.

A healthier Wales: collecting driven by a Collections Development Policy is more likely to result in a collection attractive and relevant to Newport's residents and communities. Displays and a range of

Museum activities and events inspired by the collections offer a valuable free resource and opportunities for engagement thus contributing to health and well-being.

A more equal Wales: We actively seek to collect material linked to so far under-represented themes and communities thus starting to address an imbalance present in the current collection. The disposal of irrelevant material frees up valuable resources which can be re-directed towards those efforts.

A resilient Wales: the collections and stories associated with objects bear testament to adaption and change throughout Newport's history and contribute to the understanding of the City's past and present. The books discussed in this report are of a generic and outdated nature and do not add to this narrative.

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language: To collect and preserve Newport's portable cultural heritage and associated stories is at the core of the Museum's Mission. The reference books listed in the attached spreadsheet do not fulfil the criteria of local relevance.

The proposed policy support's the ways of working expressed in the Future Generations Act as follows:

Long-Term: Newport Museum and Art Gallery strives to care for the city's collection for the benefit of current and future generations. A focus of resources on relevant material and selective collecting based on clearly defined criteria best serve this long-term goal, which is at the heart of the Museum's mission.

Preventive: the Museum operates under a clearly defined Collections Development Policy aiming to prevent the accumulation of material which is likely to remain under-used and is of no or tenuous relevance for the interpretation and understanding of Newport's past and present.

Integration: A well managed collection of relevant material is at the core of many Museum activities. These in turn form a part of Newport's wider and vibrant cultural offer.

Collaboration and Involvement: Newport Museum and Art Gallery collaborates with individuals, artists, community and special interest groups on a number of activities and projects such as exhibitions. By fostering these relationships, opportunities to collect objects or artworks meaningful to those involved arise.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Section 17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty on the Local Authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

Consultation

Comments received from wider consultation, including comments from elected members, are detailed in each application report in the attached schedule.

Background Papers

1. List of accessioned reference books to be de-accessioned (Excel spreadsheet)
2. Collections Development Policy 2020



Appendix 1 -
Accessioned Books.:



Appendix 2
-Collections Develop

Dated: 5 July 2021